

MEMO

DATE: October 5, 2006

TO: Energy and Environment Committee

FROM: Jennifer Brost Sarnecki, AICP, Associate Planner, (213) 236-1829, sarnecki@scag.ca.gov

SUBJECT: 2004 RTP Update Strategy/SAFETEA-LU Environmental Compliance

SUMMARY:

Prior to SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users), SCAG was required to update the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) every three years. Now that SAFETEA-LU is in place, the RTP may be update on a 4-year cycle rather than a 3-year cycle. The law allows the transportation conformity on the current RTP as well as the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) to continue through the fourth year. However, a key issue for the SCAG region is that the federal agencies may not allow any amendment to the conforming RTIP or RTP during the fourth year of the current RTP (the 2004 RTP). This amendment restriction could threaten the region's ability to deliver projects in a timely manner. In order to minimize the impact of this restriction, staff is preparing a 'Gap Analysis,' or an addendum to the 2004 RTP, so as to bring the current RTP into compliance with the planning provisions of the SAFETEA-LU prior to the July 1, 2007 deadline for full implementation of SAFETEA-LU. The appropriate environmental mitigation activities will be included in the Gap analysis.

BACKGROUND:

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) prepares the long-range (20 years) Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is prepared for each RTP. SAFETEA-LU requires expanded coordination on the topic of mitigation for the RTP. SCAG is currently examining potential deficiencies between what is included in the current 2004 RTP and what is required under SAFETEA-LU. Expanded coordination undertaken by SCAG will be documented and submitted to the federal agencies, along with additional efforts on topics such as safety and security. The federal agencies will then determine if SCAG's 2004 RTP meets the new federal requirements.

Staff is preparing an addendum to the 2004 RTP that would address the gap in the current plan as it relates to SAFETEA-LU requirements. This must be accomplished by the July 1, 2007 deadline for full implementation of SAFETEA-LU. The addendum, if approved by the federal agencies, would allow SCAG to continue with RTP and RTIP amendments during the fourth year of the current plan. The Transportation and Communications Committee (TCC) approved moving forward with the proposed strategy to update the 2004 RTP in compliance with SAFETEA-LU at their June 2006 meeting, and the Regional Council approved the TCC recommendation at their July 2006 meeting. Overall, staff is pursuing the following steps:

1. Follow up with the federal agencies on proposed RTP/RTIP amendment 'threshold' criteria.
2. Pursue legislative relief to the planning restrictions that may be imposed in the fourth year of the current RTP.

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3. Prepare an addendum based on the 'Gap Analysis' to bring the current 2004 RTP into compliance with the planning provisions of SAFETEA-LU to the extent possible and take the proposed addendum to the Regional Council for adoption by March 2007.
4. Adopt a fully updated and SAFETEA-LU compliant RTP by December 2007.

To comply with the new SAFETEA-LU environmental requirements, staff has contacted all the cities and counties in the region as well as Federal, State and Tribal land use planning, natural resource, wildlife, environmental protection, historic preservation, conservation, and transportation agencies to specifically follow up on the mitigation measures included in the 2004 RTP EIR. In addition, to gain input from the interested parties, SCAG will be conducting two regional workshops. These workshops will focus on the 2004 RTP EIR mitigation measures and will be held at the following locations and times:

Tuesday, October 10th, 11:00 a.m. – Noon
SCAG – Los Angeles Office
818 W. 7th Street, 12th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90017

Thursday, October 12th, 1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.
SCAG – Riverside Office
3600 Lime Street, Suite 216
Riverside, CA 92501